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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RICE'S INITIAL WORKING MEETING WITH THE
AFRICAN UNION

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Ambassador Rice on April 23 met with the entire African Union (AU) as part of her pledge to conduct regular meetings with the African Group. The discussion encompassed U.S. priorities, peace and security in Africa, socio-economic issues, UN reform, non-proliferation, and the AU-UN and AU-U.S. relationships. Both sides agreed to conduct additional AU-U.S. meetings with targeted agendas. END SUMMARY.

AGENDA FOR INITIAL AU-U.S. MEETING

¶2. (SBU) Ambassador Rice held an initial meeting with African Union (AU) PermReps on April 23 to discuss issues of common concern. Rice had suggested regular meetings with the AU members during her first official reception as PermRep, held on February 4, in honor of the African Group. The agenda for the April 23 meeting included: (1) support for Africa's Peace and Security Agenda at the UN; (2) support for Africa's socio-economic issues at the UN; (3) UN and Security Council reform; and (4) human rights, democracy, and good governance issues. The AU PermRep hosted the event, and all 53 African Union member states were represented, most by their PermReps.

RICE SHARES U.S. PRIORITIES

¶3. (SBU) In a lively exchange, Ambassador Rice described the priorities of the new Administration, including: economic development and poverty reduction; strengthening the AU and the UN's abilities to effectively and efficiently address peacekeeping issues; climate change; and non-proliferation. She stressed the deep commitment of the new Administration to support development, including the recent announcements of the \$1.1 billion food security initiative and the \$448 million pledged to assist the most vulnerable. On climate change, she called on everyone to help find creative solutions, and suggested the creation of a small working group to address the issue. Rice noted the need for Africa to plan on how to adapt to climate change--and also to take advantage of it-- to potentially leapfrog developmentally (i.e. directly utilize the eco-friendly energy sources found in Africa, like geothermal, water and wind, instead of building traditional fossil-fuel methods of energy production) in order to foster a positive result from this crisis. Additionally, Ambassador Rice asked all African members to support the U.S. candidate for the Human Rights Council.

WARM WELCOME BY THE AU

¶4. (SBU) Djiboutian PR Roble Olhaye, who organized this meeting on behalf of the AU, stressed the significant convergence of priorities between the U.S. and the AU. He noted the African Group's priorities currently included strengthening development, halting conflict, alleviating

poverty, and addressing climate change. All members praised Ambassador Rice for following through with her pledge to meet with the African Group.

PEACE AND SECURITY: NEED A HOLISTIC APPROACH

¶5. (SBU) Angola suggested using the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) as an instrument to stop violent actions on the African continent. Sudan called for a holistic approach to crises, such as in Somalia, in order to eradicate poverty and create a lasting peace. Algeria asked the U.S. to build understanding and to help stop outside influences (i.e. neo-colonialism) from hampering the peace and security of Africa.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES: AFRICA NEEDS MORE AID

¶6. (SBU) On socio-economic issues, Egypt welcomed the new U.S. direction, and requested increased U.S. and international assistance. Egypt noted the G-8 was behind in its commitments to doubling aid to Africa by 2010, and predicted progress towards the Millennium Development Goals would be hampered by the worldwide economic crisis. Ghana, Cameroon, and Rwanda echoed the call for more aid to be delivered to Africa.

UNSC REFORM: AFRICA GROSSLY UNDER-REPRESENTED

¶7. (SBU) On UN reform, Sierra Leone, quoting President Kennedy in 1963, said the UN can't survive as a static organization. With Africa's population at 900 million and roughly 60 percent of Security Council issues relating to Africa, the continent was grossly under-represented, the PR said. The PR stressed that for the Security Council to

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maintain its relevance, legitimacy, and importance, Africa needed increased representation in both the permanent and non-permanent seats. Rice responded that the Council did need to be reformed and acknowledged Africa's under-representation.

NON-PROLIFERATION: CALL FOR MECHANISMS FOR ALL COUNTRIES

¶8. (SBU) On non-proliferation, Zimbabwe, as current chair of the UN's Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) preparatory committee, said the international community needed to identify mechanisms to address countries both inside and outside the treaty. Morocco thanked the U.S. for efforts on non-proliferation, and called for Africa and the U.S. to think together about how to address issues of common concern.

CALL FOR GREATER U.S. INVOLVEMENT AT THE AU

¶9. (SBU) Tanzania called for a stronger U.S. presence at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, and cited peace and justice issues, the right to protection, and humanitarian concerns as potential topics for future debate. Tanzania also welcomed the U.S. decision to join the Human Rights Council.

FIRST OF (HOPEFULLY) MANY MEETINGS

¶10. (SBU) Rice expressed hope that this meeting would be the first of such exchanges, and suggested that future meetings have a more limited agenda, so that a specific issue could be explored in greater depth.
Rice